Suggestion on Mea's Premises

2701. DR. KARAN SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a suggestion has been received that the Ministry of External Affairs instead of putting up a new Building complex, it should move into Ashoka Hotel premises which may be renamed Ashoka Bhawan in view of its magnificent architecture and ideal location.

(b) if so, Government's reaction to this suggestion?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) On receipt of the suggestion, the concerned Ministry of the Government was approached by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry was advised that Government had accepted the recommendation of the Disinvestment Commission that hotels situated in prime locations like Delhi and Bangalore may be handed over to established hotel chains through a competitive bidding process to be run on a long-term structured contract on lease-cum-management basis.

Pressure from U.S. on the release of Hurriyat Leaders

2702. MISS MABEL REBELLO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Hurriya leaders were released only under pressure from President of U.S.;

(b) whether it is a fact that U.S. are working behind the scene to bring India and Pakistan and the Hurriyat to the negotiating table; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) The

decision to release the Hurriyat leaders was taken by the Central Government in consultation with the State Government. There is no question of Government acting under pressure from any quarter, Government's position is well known that there is no room for third-party mediation in Jammu and Kashmir.

(b) and (c) There is no US mediation to bring India, Pakistan and Kashmiri groups to the negotiating table. The US Government Spokesman has stated on a number of occasions that it does not seek a mediator role between India and Pakistan with regard to Jammu and Kashmir. On 7th July, the US Government stated, in response to a question on this issue, that "I saw those reports, and know, we are not and have not done any such things... the United States has not changed our approach to Kashmir. We do not see ourselves as mediators"

Pak appeal to India

†2703. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Pakistan has appealed to India to postpone actions against all terrorist groups active in Jammu and Kashmir;

(b) if so, whether Government is going to accede to such appeal; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (c) As part of its policy of sponsoring, aiding and abetting cross-border terrorism in the State of Jammu & Kashmir, Pakistan has, time and again, been critical of the actions of our security forces against terrorists;

Government remains firm in its resolve to defeat Pakistan's

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.